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SOME LITERARY TRIFLES¹.

IT sometimes happens to every one that the mind is in a state between sleep and vigilance. Then our thoughts run their own course; they are not marshalled into methodical grooves by the directing influence of our will, and are yet devoid of that admixture of absurdity and grotesqueness that accompany real dreams. The association of one idea with the other is of the slightest, the most divergent topics are taken up and dropped again to make room for the next that may happen to strike our fancy, without any more than an imaginary connexion linking them together. Then there is no limit to the range of dissolving views that chase each other before the mind's eye; past experiences, expectations, questions of practical life, subjects of study, facts, and fancies roll and turn in the turmoil of an uncontrolled mental agitation, half imaginative and half intellectual. Sometimes the tumult is not quite so riotous; the ideas, it is true, gambol freely and tumble over one another, but they confine themselves to one particular range of topics, within which they play their antics, without, however, going outside the ring drawn round them.

It is such a succession of vagaries which I propose to put before you. Experiencing once such a state of semi-somnolence, my riotous ideas were good enough to confine their game to literary points only, and to such as had some connexion with matters Jewish. Thankful for their considerateness, I resolved to snapshot them, and I now

¹ Read before the Jews' College Literary Society, London, on March 24, 1901.

reproduce them in all their littleness and their unmethodical dissoluteness.

I do not know what it was that turned my mind to Charles Dickens, but I discovered myself wondering whether that great novelist had ever studied the Rambam. No need to tell you that the word "Rambam" represents the initials of the four words "Rabbi Moses ben Maimun," and denotes the great Jewish sage commonly known as Maimonides. But we frequently denote by the expression "studying the Rambam," the study of the great religious code of his, to which he had given the title of the *Yad Hachazaka*, "The Strong Hand"; and which he had also called the *Mishne Torah*, "The Deuteronomy." Now, of course, nobody would imagine such a thing as Dickens studying the Rambam, but the association which connected these two names in my mind was this.

One of the principal characters in *Oliver Twist* is Fagin. This English gentleman of the Jewish persuasion—Dickens himself calls him all along "the Jew"—is not a very amiable personage, and in the end his moral and social aberrations bring upon him a sentence of death. Whilst awaiting his punishment he does not soften his heart, but, if possible, hardens it still more against every gentle feeling. His frame of mind is shocking. Dickens, in describing it, says: "At one time he raved and blasphemed; and at another howled and tore his hair. Venerable men of his own persuasion had come to pray beside him, but 'he had driven them away with curses.' They renewed their charitable efforts, and 'he beat them off.'"

It is this passage which reminded me so strongly of a passage in Maimonides' work, "The Strong Hand." It is said there that any one who sees his neighbour committing a sin or walking in a way which is not good is in duty bound to reprove him, and to try to bring him to a better frame of mind; for it is said: "Thou shalt reprove thy neighbour." It must be done as privately and gently as possible. Should such reproof be found

without effect, a second and third effort must be made; in fact, the attempts must be continued till the sinner finally refuses to listen to him who reproves him and "beats him off." Other Jewish authorities say that the efforts must be continued till the well-meaning mentor is "driven away by curses." Both the one and the other opinion is based upon precepts contained in the Talmud.

Now I cannot help thinking that Dickens's description of Fagin cursing the venerable men that came to pray with him, and on a renewal of their efforts beating them off, is no mere coincidence.

Dickens was a careful and painstaking author, and I do not doubt but that, before penning that horrible scene, he consulted some Jew, learned in the Law, and asked him what the Jews would do were a case like that of Fagin brought before them, and that thus he must have learned that the Law prescribes that attempts to arouse in a criminal a feeling of penitence must be repeated even unto curses and blows on the part of the sinner.

But even if Dickens had quoted Maimonides by name, it would not have been so very strange. There are other instances of novelists citing Rabbinical books. Thus Mrs. Augusta Evans Wilson, in her well-known novel entitled *At the Mercy of Tiberius*, quotes the Mechilta, an ancient Rabbinical exposition of the book of Exodus. I am not going to pass judgment on this much-read romance; some people like it very much, others find it only passable. It certainly has one great defect, the book is much too learned. When the celebrated Lessing was quite young, he wrote once to his sister, that the best wish he could send her on the New Year was, that she might be robbed of all her money, because that would be of the greatest benefit to her. In the same way, if the authoress of *At the Mercy of Tiberius* had been robbed of her learning before writing the novel, it would have been to the great advantage of the book. It contains a murder trial, and the speech of the counsel for the defence is given in full.

I wonder what an English judge and jury would have said to such an harangue. The counsel commences by addressing the jury as follows: "To the same astute and unchanging race, whose relentless code of jurisprudence demanded an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, we owe the instructive picture of cautious inquiry, of tender solicitude for the inviolability of human life, that glows in immortal lustre on the pages of the Mechilta of the Talmud. In the trial of a Hebrew criminal there were 'Lactees' consisting of two men, one of whom stood at the door of the court, with a red flag in his hand, and the other sat on a white horse at some distance on the road to execution. Each of these men cried aloud continually the name of the suspected criminal, of the witnesses, and his crime; and vehemently called upon any person who knew anything in his favour to come forward and testify. Have we, supercilious braggarts of this age of progress, attained to the prudent wisdom of Sanhedrim?"

This pompous tirade has certainly a substratum of historical truth; it is incorrectly quoted, some details are wrongfully added, the demand of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life is far from being so "relentless" in the Rabbinical "code of jurisprudence" as the authoress imagines. But what of that? Readers when taking up a novel of the kind expect a sort of entertainment which is quite different from exact instruction on the details of Rabbinical penal procedure. It has no connexion with the rest of the book, and is, so to say, dragged in by violence.

Quite different are the references to Jews and Judaism in a book like *Daniel Deronda*. In that work, certain conditions of Jewish life constitute a considerable part of the plot. To inquire into their value would be an agreeable and useful task, and would not be by any means a trifle. But my mind being bent on trifles, I did not think of that, but it was Mr. Klesmer that kept dangling

before my mental vision. Herr Klesmer is described as one of those virtuosos before whom every human interest sinks into insignificance compared with musical art. He belongs to several nations, and to no nation. He is "a felicitous combination of the German, the Slave, and the Semite, with grand features, brown hair floating in artistic fashion, and brown eyes in spectacles . . . He can hardly tolerate anything the English do in music." A lady asking him for his opinion about her performance, receives the reply, that she had not been well taught, for, as George Eliot says, "Woman was dear to him, but music was dearer." "He had an imperious magic in his fingers that seemed to send a nerve-thrill through ivory key and wooden hammer, and compel the strings to make a quivering, lingering speech for him." The novelist describes Herr Klesmer's entrance into an assembly of ordinary well-bred Englishmen, "his mane of hair floating backward in massive inconsistency with the chimney-pot hat, which had the look of having been put on for a joke above his pronounced but well-modelled features and powerful clean-shaven mouth and chin; his tall figure clad in a way which, not being strictly English, was all the more strange for its apparent emphasis of intention. Draped in a loose garment with a Florentine beretta on his head, he would have been fit to stand by the side of Leonardo da Vinci; but how when he presented himself in trousers which were not what English feeling demanded about the knees?—and when the fire that showed itself in his glances and the movements of his head, as he looked round him with curiosity, was turned into comedy by a hat which ruled that mankind should have well-cropped hair and a staid demeanour?"

Herr Klesmer's ideas of that which constitutes musical art are equally transcendental. "A creative artist is no more a mere musician than a great statesman is a mere politician."—"The life of the true artist is out of the reach of any but choice organizations—natures framed to love

perfection and to labour for it; ready, like all true lovers, to endure, to wait, to say, I am not worthy, but she—Art, my mistress—is worthy, and I will live with her.”

Now this incarnation of the genius of music, this Apollo of Belgravia, this Orpheus descended to the fogs of London, why did George Eliot give him the name of Klesmer? How did she come by the word? She must have picked it up in some place in London where Polish Jews live, for the word “Klesmer” is the Yiddish for “musician.” Her description of Ezra Cohen, of his family, and his mode of living, shows clearly that George Eliot must have made excursions into those quarters of London city in which Polish Jews are wont to congregate. On some such expedition in quest of models for her Jewish pictures, she must have come across the word Klesmer, and not the word only, but that which it represented, and she named her hero of musical art by that name. For the Klesmer used to play, and still plays in some countries in Eastern Europe, an important part in Jewish life. The word is a curious compound, and, if translated literally, means “instruments of music.” As to the Mexicans, when they saw a European on horseback for the first time, man and horse appeared to be one, so to the popular Jewish mind the musician and his instrument was one, and the performers were called כלי זמר, musical instruments. In some parts the grammatical vagary went even still further, and they were called Kle-Semorim, reminding one of the “Cherubims” of the English Bibles. I read once in German a description of such Klesmer, or Klesmorim, which is interesting for its truthful delineation of the importance of the Klesmer. It runs thus: “The ‘musical instruments,’ Kle-Semorim, are a portion of Jewish poetical life. They wander about with the fiddle from year’s beginning to year’s end, knocking at the doors of their brethren, and give him a word in music—his holy tunes. Oh, that Jewish music! It is more than the Alphornreigen to the Swiss mountaineer—it reminds one of so many countries;

it reminds one of Zion, of Greece, of Rome, of Spain, of Provence, of Italy, of Poland, and of many, many times—that music contains something of everything, but transcribed into Jewish tunes;—at the same time weeping and laughing, exulting and moaning; and how often does it happen that wild jubilation breaks forth from the shrillest cry of anguish, or a cry of anguish from the midst of joyful jubilation! These living instruments go from door to door all the year round. When the children stand round the lights of the Chanuka lamp, and sing the song Moöuz Tsur Yeshouösee, they suddenly hear two fiddles and a flute accompanying their song, so clearly and sorrowfully—joyfully and sadly—warbling and trembling, as such Jewish songs are wont to be sung. And then gradually other Jewish songs have their turn, and are played—the Kol Nidre, the Avoudah, the Sefira Yotzer, Purim songs, and all such pieces, which our Troubadours, the Klesmer—for it is they who have entered so quietly with their wonderful evening greeting—bring with them of new and old—ever so old tunes.”

This striking picture of our Klesmer appeared many years ago in an anonymous article, but I have every reason to believe that it issued from the pen of Emanuel Deutsch.

But these ambulant performances are not the only duties of the Klesmer. One of their principal functions is that of assisting at weddings. Then it is not only the two fiddles and a flute that officiate, but there is a whole orchestra in proper trim presided over by their bandmaster. The duties of that ruling spirit, the bandmaster, are of a peculiar nature. His functions are complicated, and, strange to say, need not include that of being a musical instrument himself. He is termed “Badchan,” or also “the Marshallik”; he directs what pieces are to be performed, and to what tunes his own humoristic compositions must be recited. He is *par excellence* the provider of jokes, the professional jester. This is sufficiently indicated

by the appellation of "Marshallik," which is a popular corruption of the German "Schalk," and of "Badchan," which is from a Rabbinical root and denotes jester. In some parts of Russia and Poland it used to be, and is perhaps still, as impossible to have a wedding without a Badchan as without a bridegroom and bride. Whilst the wedding guests are dining, or dancing, or diverting themselves in some other way, the Badchan holds forth his jokes, his comic and his earnest songs, he carries on with great gravity a mock argumentation on some ridiculous question. It is not surprising that in many cases the jokes turn out to be rather broad, and the songs just verging upon the undesirable. But though that is not surprising, it is surprising that there are occasionally found among these Badchonim real poets, who know how to blend jest with earnest, and understand how to impressively weave into their songs the pathos of Israel's sufferings and Israel's joys. Some of these poems exist in print, but they are little known, clad as they are in their unconventional garb of Yiddish.

But it is not only as the master of a band of Klesmer and of the professional jester, that the Badchan or Marshallik comes to the front. On certain occasions one of his functions is to officiate as preacher. In some districts at every wedding it is his task "zu strofen die Kalle," to impress the bride with the solemnity of the hour. A chair is placed in the middle of the room on which the bride is seated, her head and face covered with a veil. The wedding guests sit round her in a circle, and the Badchan steps forward, and, in an impressive voice and tone, addresses the bride, and reminds her of her days of youth that are passed and her duties for the future, of the importance of married life, of those of her departed relatives to whom she had been particularly dear. Here again the surprising thing is that some of these Badchonim rise sometimes to remarkable eloquence and display a depth of feeling which sinks deep into the hearts of their audience.

This combination of the functions of jester and preacher reminds us of a question which was once put to Lessing, whether a preacher should be allowed to write comedies ; to which Lessing answered, "Why not, if he can?" Again he was asked, whether a writer of comedies was allowed to write sermons ; to which he answered, "Why not, if he likes." So that, if anybody should object to the union of the functions of preacher and president of an orchestra of Klesmer, do not let him quote the authority of Lessing.

But whether George Eliot's Herr Klesmer owes his patronymic to the circumstance alluded to or not, there is another Jewish trait in the same novel which is rather puzzling. It is the passage in which Deronda's visit to a synagogue in Frankfort-on-the-Main is described. It was on a Friday evening that "he happened to take his seat in a line with an elderly man—his ordinary clothes, as well as the *talith* or white blue-fringed kind of blanket which is the garment of prayer, very much worn." He attracted Deronda's notice, and returned it, till at last their eyes met. Deronda immediately felt a prayer-book pushed towards him. Meanwhile "the white thaliths had mustered, the reader had mounted the *Almemor* or platform, and the service began. Deronda, having looked enough at the German translation of the Hebrew in the book before him to know that he was chiefly hearing Psalms and Old Testament passages or phrases, gave himself up to that strongest effect of chanted liturgies which is independent of detailed verbal meaning ; . . . but this evening all were one for Deronda ; the chant of the *Chazan's* or Reader's grand wide-ranging voice with its passage from monotony to sudden cries, the outburst of sweet boys' voices from the little choir, the devotional swaying of men's bodies backwards and forwards, the very commonness of the building and shabbiness of the scene." . . .

Now, George Eliot, we have every reason to assume, wanted to give here a picture drawn from life ; how is it then that, in describing an ordinary Friday evening

service, she makes the men wearing the *talith*, and describes the prayers as consisting chiefly of Psalms and Old Testament passages? There can only be one explanation. Something untoward had happened to George Eliot. She was determined to witness a Friday evening service in a synagogue, and it so happened that she chose a Friday evening which was, at the same time, the evening of *Yom Kippur*, of the Day of Atonement. This is the only occasion when the *talith* is worn on a Friday evening. Somebody must have pushed a *Machzor* of *Yom Kippur* into her hands, which she opened at random, and the contents of which she believed to be the ordinary Friday evening service. That this is the correct explanation is evident from the further description of the liturgy, for she proceeds: "The whole scene was a coherent strain, its burthen a passionate regret, which, if he had known the liturgy for the Day of Reconciliation, he might have clad in its antithetic burthen: 'Happy the eye which saw all these things, but verily to hear only of them afflicts the soul. Happy the eye that saw our temple and the joy of our congregation, but verily to hear only of them afflicts our soul. Happy the eye that saw the fingers when tuning every kind of song, but verily to hear only of them afflicts our soul,' " &c.

This passage shows that George Eliot was somehow aware that something was wrong in her description, and that she mixed up the service of the evening of *Yom Kippur* with that of an ordinary Friday evening.

Thinking of impressions experienced in the synagogue on a Friday evening, I wondered how the Portuguese Jews of the Bevis Marks Synagogue might have been impressed by their chazan on the Friday evenings of the years 1775 and 1776. It was on the Friday evening that their chazan Leoni had his evening off from the theatre where he was one of the actors in Sheridan's play, the *Duenna*. We are able to form some notion as to the sort of voice he had, for, in a letter reproduced by Thomas Moore in his life

of Sheridan, we find that this author wrote to Linley : "I think I heard you say you never heard Leoni, and I cannot briefly explain to you the character and situation of the persons on the stage with him. The first, a dialogue between Quick and Mrs. Mattocks (who played Isaac and Donna Louisa), I would wish to be a pert, sprightly air ; for though some of the words mayn't seem suited to it, I should mention that they are neither of them in earnest in what they say. Leoni takes it up seriously, and I want him to show himself advantageously in the six lines, beginning 'Gentle maid.' I should tell you that he sings nothing well but in a plaintive or pastoral style ; and his voice is such as appears to me always to be hurt by much accompaniment. I have observed, too, that he never gets so much applause as when he makes a cadence. Therefore my idea is, that he should make a flourish at 'Shall I grieve thee ?' and return to 'Gentle maid,' and so sing that part of the tune again."

"The run of the opera," says Moore, "had no parallel in the annals of the drama." The *Duenna* was acted no less than seventy-five times during the season, the only intermissions being a few days at Christmas, and the Friday in every week—the latter on account of Leoni, who, being a Jew, could not act on those nights."

Leoni's part in the opera was that of Don Carlos. "Carlos was originally meant to be a Jew, and is called 'Cousin Moses' in the first sketch of the dialogue." But Moses was changed into Carlos, as Moore thinks, from the consideration that the former would apply too personally to Leoni, who was to perform the character. I do not think many particulars are known of the life of this chazan—opera singer. I believe he left England, and went to Jamaica, where nothing further was heard of him—a termination of his career at which nobody can be surprised.

The impression which the Friday evening service in the synagogue at Frankfort-on-the-Main made upon Daniel Deronda was quite different from that which it

made about three hundred years ago upon another Englishman who visited the synagogue in the same city. Hugh Broughton was a renowned Protestant theologian who lived 1549-1612. He was not only a good Hebrew scholar, but he was also acquainted with many Rabbinical works in the original. He occupied a great portion of his life in theological disputes, and was of a bitter, rancorous disposition. Joseph Scaliger called him "furiosus et male-dicus," of a fiery temper and a sharp tongue. Scaliger himself was not sweet-mouthed by any means in his controversies, and Broughton's invective must have been rather acute to appear remarkable to a man like Scaliger. Broughton travelled much in Holland and Germany, and had frequent disputes with Rabbis whom he wished to convert to Christianity. On one occasion he visited the synagogue at Frankfort-on-the-Main on a Friday or a Festival evening, and on leaving, an acquaintance asked him, "Did not our Reader sing like an angel?" "No," Broughton replied, "he barked like a dog." He must have thought that a snarl like this would contribute to his securing eternal bliss for himself. Daniel Deronda was differently impressed—the man who had been brought up as a Christian, and discovered in the end that he was really a Jew.

There is another English novel which deals pre-eminently with Jewish characters, the plot of which is based upon a Christian having been brought up as a Jew, who discovers in the end that he is really a Christian. The novel is entitled *The Limb*, and was written by an anonymous author, who describes himself on the title-page as X.L. It was in 1896 that Dr. Theodor Herzl published his pamphlet *Der Judenstaat*. This was subsequently translated into English, and Sir Samuel Montagu sent a copy of that translation to Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Gladstone sent a reply, in which he said: "The subject of your inclosure is most interesting: not easy for an outsider to form an opinion on; impertinent, perhaps, to speak were it formed.

I am surprised, however, to see the misery of the Jews so broadly stated. Of course, I am strongly *anti-anti-Semitic*. In a singular and rather striking novel called *The Limb*, you would find some rather exceptional handling."

It is superfluous to say that the adjectives applied by Mr. Gladstone to that novel are remarkably correct. The novel *The Limb* is singular and striking, and the handling of the Jewish features, which form a great portion of the book, is exceptional. But there is no real connexion between the book and Dr. Herzl's pamphlet, except that in both religious persecution is accentuated. But on this point also the greatest discrepancy prevails. Nor is there any likeness between *The Limb* and *Daniel Deronda*, however much both are occupied with Jewish topics. It is strange that *The Limb* is not more widely known among the Jewish novel-reading public. It is greatly above the standard of every-day novels. The method of religious persecution, as practised in Russia, is described in a realistic manner. But in the description of Jews and Judaism there is this difference between George Eliot and X. L., that in *Daniel Deronda* both the descriptions of Jewish persons and of Jewish customs are, in the main, portraits, they are not the fruits of mere book-learning or creative fiction, whilst in *The Limb* the Jewish customs are mostly the result of book-learning, and the Jewish characters the outcome of creative imagination, both being only scantily aided by portraiture.

The town whence hail the Jews depicted in *The Limb* is described by the author himself as an extraordinary place. "A small town," says the author, "in White Russia. No one who has only seen the Jews as they are in Petersburg and Moscow can have any idea of what this extraordinary people really are like. At S., far away from any railway station, and indeed not near any navigable part of the Dwina, the appearance of this Hebrew settlement was as extraordinary as anything you can

imagine." The same is said of the Jews of that town, who are with one exception almost the only Jews that play a part in the narrative. They are depicted as "half-crazed fanatics and semi-barbarians." They are "not orthodox Jews, but ignorant fanatics, strongly tainted with Chasidism." The Rabbi of the place was "a half mad mystic," and his congregants are also "mad fanatics, and really most unorthodox Jews." We see that the Jews of that place are Jews of imagination and not of experience. They are painted with screaming exaggeration of colour. The same extravagant grotesqueness adheres to the two principal characters of the book. Faivel Ravouna is grotesquely wicked, Michael or Michka is grotesquely divine. Faivel was a "Jew such as you see in London, Paris, or Vienna, or Petersburg; he was very rich; he was a scoffer, unbeliever, cynic, sceptic." He did not hesitate, whenever it suited his purposes, to conform to the most extraordinary rites of the congregation at S. He lived only for his revenge. He obtained a child, the son of Lotta Czapak, a Roumanian, and a gipsy musician. He names him Michael, and for purposes of his own brings him up as a Jew. Michael, or Michka, thought that he was Faivel's nephew. The boy was educated in the strictest Jewish fashion by the Rabbi and the Melammed. He was handed by Faivel to the care of some powerful Christian protectors for the purpose of undergoing a thorough musical training abroad, on the understanding that no attempt of any kind should be made to convert the boy to Christianity, or to induce him to alter his religious views in any way. He came to Paris, studied music, and some Jewish friends took care of him, and saw that nothing was omitted which the most religious training of a Jew might require. His progress was extraordinary. Michka Ravouna and Herr Klesmer have this in common, that in both the genius of musical art is incarnated in its absolute purity. But whilst in Herr Klesmer everything is robust, massive, primordially vigorous, in Michka

Ravouna everything is divinely gentle, womanly tender, delicate, and spiritual. He is called by all who heard him sing the angel-singer, the women say that they see his soul while he is singing, he has the face, and the voice, and the spirit of an angel.

In the details of the book the author seizes upon every opportunity to air his knowledge of things Jewish. He says that Michka was never without his Arba Kanfoth or talith Katan, although he wore no peoth. He was careful not to wear Shaätnez and his food was prepared in a special way, and a double set of kitchen utensils and vessels for the table was kept for him. He is called an ascetic young Talmid-Chacham. The author must have spent a good deal of time over reading up such references about Jewish laws and usages as were accessible to him. The lack of original, first-hand knowledge displays itself frequently. He says, that the members of the Kahal consisted of twelve daions, who were leading citizens, being opulent merchants. They strictly kept the law of Sabbath, and as an example, the author says that they "devoutly refrained from walking more than 2,000 steps from their houses on the Sabbath, or, if they did so, they were careful to bury in the ground on the very two thousandth step a fragment, or a crumb, of their household bread, which, according to usage, establishing as it did their house, enabled them without sin to walk yet another 2,000 steps from the spot where the crumb lay buried." Those who know anything of the precepts about the "Sabbath boundary" see at a glance how matters become distorted and transformed into caricature when second-hand book-learning is taken in, but not digested. The author speaks of the school of Shammai, the school of Hillel, of commentaries on commentaries, which fill the 2,500 printed pages of the Halacha, of the Agada, *and* of the Gemara, of the book of Zohar, of Shiur Koma, Ozar Hakabod, Toledoth Adam, Sefer Jezira, Kaarat Kezef, and of the Kabbala, or Chochma Nistar (sic). He quotes Rashi's interpretation on Hillel's saying about the

Messiah, reproduces scraps from Maimonides, and has some knowledge of the Jewish prayer-book, certain pieces of which he makes Michka recite, all the while interspersing remarks so as to point out the superiority of the Christian over the Jewish religion. This latter feature makes the dénouement all the more striking; it is ghastly, yet eminently artistic, and I shall not tell you what it comes to, because I hope that those of you who have not read the book will yet do so.

The author's remark that Faivel Ravouna "did not dress like a Jew" caused my wandering mind to fly off at a tangent, and I all at once thought of a passage in a modern novel, to which Mr. Israel Abrahams had once drawn my attention, which refers to clothes bought from a Jew. If students want fresh news about the presence of Jews in England during the period between their expulsion and their readmission, the novelists provide them with such; for instance, Scott in *Kenilworth* proves right enough that there were Jews in England in Elizabeth's reign. But a new and rather popular romance of the Civil War, by Edward Pickering, *The Dogs of War*, introduces us to pedlars selling clothes outside Bristol about 1648! "I had a thought that you would fall into some trouble, and having got this dress from a Jew pedlar fellow, which for plain discomfort is the worst ever devised, I left the camp." This anachronism made me think of another imaginary case of a person having got into trouble, not indeed by buying clothes from a Jew, but by looking at Jewish clothes. I allude to the second letter in the first book of the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*. I have given elsewhere a description of that book, and it suffices now to mention that it is a satirical production, in which the opponents of the celebrated Johann Reuchlin are mercilessly pilloried and scourged, and that it is written in the dog-Latin of the monks of the day, which gives the pictures a character of undescribable comicality. The impression these letters produced in Germany was electric. Even

the scruples of the more sober friends of Reuchlin had to struggle with the inclination to smile, but soon laughter gained the day and drove every other emotion before it. It is said that Erasmus of Rotterdam, while suffering from an affection of the throat, laughed so much at one of these letters that the abscess in his throat opened, and he was cured. Heinrich Heine alludes to the letters and their effect:—

Der Erasmus musste lachen
 So gewaltig ob dem Spass,
 Dass ihm platzte in dem Rachen
 Sein Geschwür, und er genas.
 Auf der Ebersburg desgleichen
 Lachte Sickingen wie toll,
 Und in allen deutschen Reichen
 Das Gelächter wiederscholl.
 Alte lachten wie die Jungen,
 Eine einzige Lache nur
 War ganz Wittenberg. Sie sangen
 "Gaudeamus igitur."

Heinrich Heine proceeds in a style so peculiarly Heinian that you must excuse me from quoting it. In the letter I allude to, one Joannes Pellifex professes to be greatly agitated in his mind at an act of sacrilege which he had committed. He says: "Once I was walking with a friend in Frankfort-on-the-Main when I saw two respectable-looking men in black tunics, hoods, and scapularies (et habuerunt nigras tunicas, et magna caputia cum liripipiis). I took them for *magistri nostri*, and took my cap off to them. My friend exclaimed: 'Gracious, what have you done? These people are Jews, and you take your cap off to them!' I never was so frightened in my life (tunc ego ita fui perterritus, ut si vidissem unum diabolum). 'Do you think,' I asked, 'that I have committed a great sin? I did it in ignorance.' My friend said that he considered it a mortal sin, equivalent to idolatry; it was a violation of the commandment, 'believe in one God.' But I remonstrated that I did it in ignorance: 'I admit, had I done

it knowing that they were Jews, I should fully deserve to be burnt alive, for then it would have been heresy ; but I swear and protest, I really believed they were Magistri.' ” But his friend gave him only cold comfort. He said that there was only one thing to be done to save his conscience, and that was, to make a confession in the proper quarter. His plea of ignorance was all nonsense ; do not all Jews wear a yellow badge ? “ I noticed it, why didn't you ? ” The sinner is in a great perturbation of mind. “ Pray,” he writes, “ tell me how I am to solve the question ; let me know whether my case is a simple case, or an episcopal case, or a case for the Pope himself. I ask you, is it right of the authorities in Frankfurt to allow Jews to walk about in the same garb as *magistri nostri* ? I consider it a shocking scandal ; it simply makes a laughingstock of holy theology (*mihi videtur quod non est rectum et est magnum scandalum, etiam est una derisio sacrosanctae theologiae*). ”

Thinking of Reuchlin and his opponents, I wondered whether those who objected to innovations in Christian doctrine attached any sacredness to the sum of a thousand ducats. Reuchlin's opponents did not understand how it was possible for a good Christian—not only to defend the Jews—but to refuse joining the hue and cry that was being raised against the Jews and their books by Johann Pfefferkorn and his abettors. They therefore invented the tale that Reuchlin had received from the Jews a bribe of a thousand ducats. It so happens that the Jews of Frankfurt were at that time penniless, and, when they wanted money to defend themselves against Pfefferkorn's machinations, they were obliged to borrow some at two hundred per cent. About 270 years later, a tale of a bribe of a thousand ducats from the Jews again made its appearance. It was after Lessing had published some fragments from a work by the physician Reimarus, and known as the Wolfenbüttel fragments. Their incisive critique of certain tenets of the Christian doctrine scandalized several people,

and it was Pastor Göze of Hamburg who opened a campaign against Lessing. To use a homely phrase, Pastor Göze caught a Tartar. The controversy between Lessing and Göze is one of the most memorable specimens of controversial literature, and will not cease to attract notice as long as literature shall exist. Then some low-minded people invented the absurd fable that Lessing had accepted from the Jewish community in Amsterdam the sum of a thousand ducats as a fee for his attacking the Christian Church by means of the publication of the Wolfenbüttel fragments. The libel was published at the time, but it was so stupid on the face of it, that nobody, not even Lessing's opponents, took it up.

Thinking of Amsterdam, an amusing skit occurred to me, in derision of the elder Jacob Triglandus. The religious world was at his time greatly agitated. The disputes for and against Calvin's doctrines ran high, and in Holland the quarrels between Gomarists and Arminians or between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants, derived additional virulence from the political animosities that were mixed up with the theological discord. The synod of Dordrecht became a powerful body; it was the bulwark of those who were opposed to Arminianism, and it was presided over by Jacob Triglandus, who, although a Roman Catholic by birth, became afterwards a fervent defender of the doctrines of Calvin. The opponents spared neither him nor his synod. All sorts of lampoons were launched against them. Triglandus is described as having a violent temper, and he obtained the nickname of "de kalkoensche haan," the Turkey-cock. The Remonstrants accused him as being the most intolerant person under the sun. One of the lampoons written against him is ascribed to the great Dutch poet Vondel, who was so closely followed by Milton in some passages of the *Paradise Lost*, in *Samson Agonistes*, and elsewhere. Vondel was very violent in his outbursts against the Contra-Remonstrants, against Triglandus, and

the synod of Dordrecht. Vondel says that the Turkeycock looks very red, because he drinks so much wine, and carries all the contents of the wine-cask of Heidelberg in his nose. He is above all things afraid of being considered tolerant in matters religious. Once when beating his wife the servant asked him, "Don't you know that the Mistress is not right in her head?" "Hold your tongue," answered Triglandus, "I do it so as not to be suspected of tolerance."

Hooft gy Heeren, hoort, ik laet u weten
't kalkoensche Haentjen heeft zyn wijf gesmeten ;
En zyn Meit, die wat snar in de bek is,
Zey, Meester, weetje wel dat onze vrou gek is ?
Swyg, zeide hy, ik volg myn ordonantie,
Om niet suspekt te zyn van tolerantie.

Most probably not a particle of truth underlies this pasquinade. At that time Vondel was passionately defending Arminianism, and continued doing so till in his old age he turned Roman Catholic, when he commenced as passionately to defend his new persuasion.

The younger Triglandus was one of the scholars who gave a mighty impetus to the study of Hebrew. This Triglandus was a great scholar; he wrote several theological works in which he displayed a knowledge of Rabbinical literature, and his inquiring mind led him even to enter into a correspondence with Karaites. It may be said that it was in Holland that comparative Semitic philology was promulgated, after Reuchlin had introduced into Christian Europe the study of Hebrew. There is in English a biography of Reuchlin by Francis Barham. On the title-page the author calls Reuchlin the father of the Reformation. He cannot be properly called this, much less can he be called the originator of modern Bible critique, in which character he is represented by Froude in his life of Erasmus.

À propos of Barham's book, the author has made one of those curious little blunders which are not at all rare among such non-Jewish authors as receive their informa-

tion of things Jewish at second-hand. The mistake made by the Capucin friar, Henricus Seynensis, is well known. He thought that the Talmud was not a book, but a man, and he speaks of Rabbi Talmud, "ut narrat Rabbinus Talmud." Now Rabbi David Kimchi wrote a Hebrew grammar to which he gave the title "Michlol," Compendium, and Barham turns Rabbi David Kimchi into Rabbi Kimchi Michlol.

A very amiable gentleman, who, I am happy to say, is still among the living, Dr. John Henry Bridges, fell once into a similar error. Dr. Bridges has written several works; he has written about the Positivist philosophy, and translated into English some of the works of Auguste Comte. He has also edited Roger Bacon's *Opus Maius*, which edition the critics consider far from being a success. As far back as 1857 he wrote an article, "The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages." It was published in the *Oxford Essays* of that year. It is a well-written, sympathetic article, and does great credit to its author. Speaking of the sufferings of the Jews, he has occasion to cite the martyrology, *Shevet Jehudah*, "The Rod of Judah." This title denotes the contents of the book, at the same time alluding to the name of its author, who was Judah Virga, and would therefore mean also, "The Rod written by Jehudah." Dr. Bridges mixes up the title of the book with the author's name, and quotes him as Schaevet ben Virgae, "The Rod the son of Virga."

Blunders of this kind are common enough, and pardonable enough, even among such authors as endeavour to be accurate. I have, therefore, little patience when some people try to find out the sense of some allusion to things Jewish, which occur in authors who did not care at all whether they said the right thing or not. Thus we find in Horace, in the ninth Satire of the first book, that Aristius Fuscus said: "You do not think of doing any serious work on the thirtieth Sabbath, and thus grievously offending the Jews?" It is asked, what did Horace mean

by the "thirtieth Sabbath." Some said he meant Rosh Chodesh, the "New Moon's day"; others, Rosh Chodesh falling on a Sabbath; others, again, that he meant Passover. As if Horace meant anything at all! what did Romans of the stamp of Horace know about Jews and their usages? They held the Jews in great contempt (they thought generally that the Jews fasted on the Sabbath and that they worshipped in their temple the image of an ass). In citing Horace now, I gave only the gist of the passage, but not a translation; it is much too objectionable a phrase to bear rendering.

Again, the question is asked, why should Horace, when relating his conversation with Aristius Fuscus, allude to the Jews at all? Somebody wanted to cut this knot also, by assuming that Aristius Fuscus himself must have been a Jew! But why not make Horace himself a Jew whilst we are about it? Aristius Fuscus a Jew indeed! But then some of our brethren suffer of that malady of seeing a Jew in almost everybody. Thackeray, who was not particularly fond of Jews, broadly caricatures that propensity, and also the inclination for display with which the Jews are charged, in his burlesque *Coddingsby*. We are introduced to the private apartment of Raphael Mendoza. "The carpet was of white velvet—laid over several webs of Aubusson, Ispahan, and Axminster . . . of white velvet, painted with flowers, arabesques, and classic figures by Sir William Ross, Turner, Mrs. Mee, and Paul Delaroche. The edges were wrought with seed-pearls, and fringed with Valenciennes lace and bullion. The walls were hung with cloth of silver, embroidered with gold figures, over which were worked pomegranates, polyantheses, and passion-flowers, in ruby, amethyst, and smaragd. The drops of dew which the artificer had sprinkled on the flowers were diamonds. There were divans carved of amber covered with ermine. Miss Mendoza plays on an ivory pianoforte with silver and enamelled keys, and is seated on a mother-of-pearl music-stool. Everybody is a Jew, the composers

Rossini, Braham, Sloman, Weber, are all Jews. Mr. Mendoza explains to his guest that his Majesty (the King of France) is a Jew, so is the Pope of Rome; so is . . .—a whisper concealed the rest.”

It is ridiculous to say that Aristius Fuscus was a Jew. If there was a Jew alluded to at all in that Satire, it can only have been the third man mentioned there. In that case Horace caricatures one of that class of Jews of whom we have, unfortunately, a number among us, who want to force their company upon any man of distinction they come in contact with, especially if he is a non-Jew. They come across a high-placed personage, and they try to absorb him, to monopolize him. They try to get introductions to the highest social circles; they will hear, abjectedly patient, any slur cast on their faith and their race, and pretend not to notice it, as long as they are able to conceal, as they imagine, that they are Jews themselves. But at the same time they do not lose sight of their business concerns. Such tendencies are not themselves particularly Jewish, they are found among representatives of all denominations and nationalities, but a Jew displaying them is taken as the type of the whole race. It is just possible that Horace wanted to scourge a Jew of that kind. He says: “I was once walking along the Sacred Way, musing on trifles, when a person known to me only by name came up to me, grasped my hand, and said: ‘My dearest friend, how do you do?’—I answered, ‘Quite well, thank you; and you?’—The man following me, I asked, ‘what do you want?’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘only to make your acquaintance; I am a man of letters.’ ‘Indeed, I esteem you all the more for it.’”

Horace tried every expedient to get rid of him: he stood still, he pretended to whisper something to his attendant, he is all in a perspiration. But it is of no use. The man continues talking, Horace does not answer. The man says: “You are in a terrible hurry to get away from me, but I shall stick to you. Where are you going to?”—“I must visit

a sick friend who lives a long way off, on the other side of the Tiber, why should you go so far out of your way?"—"Oh! I have nothing to do; I am not tired; I will go with you." The man kept on rattling about his accomplishments in singing, dancing, and poetry.

"Have you a mother living?" Horace asked, "or any relations to whom your life is valuable?"—"No, they are all dead."—How lucky for them, I thought. A fortune-teller once told me that I should not die by poison, or sword, or pleurisy, or cough, or gout, but that a chatterbox would be the death of me.

It was now nine o'clock; they had arrived at the temple of Vesta, and the man, who had a case in court, had to present himself there, or lose his case. "Do me a favour," he asked of Horace; "assist me in my case."

"I? I am not a lawyer; besides, I am due elsewhere."

"Well, what shall I do—leave you, or leave the case?"

"Me, by all means."

"No, I won't."

Horace gave himself up for lost. The man continued chattering; he wanted an introduction to Maecenas. Horace refuses. The man says he would get it for himself. "I will bribe the servants. If the door is shut in my face, I will persevere. I will watch for opportunities; I will meet him in the streets; I will escort him home."

Just then Aristius Fuscus came along. He knew what sort of man the stranger was. Horace thought relief was near. "I pinched Aristius Fuscus; I caught his arms, nodded my head, rolled my eyes." But Fuscus pretended not to understand. "Didn't you say, Fuscus, you had some private matter to speak to me about?" "I remember, but I will tell it you at a more proper time. To-day is the thirtieth Sabbath; would you affront the Jews?"—"What do I care," said Horace.—"But I do care. I am somewhat weaker, one of the multitude. You will forgive me; I will tell you another time." Fuscus went away. Horace gave himself up for lost, when the man's party in

the lawsuit arrived. "Ho, scoundrel," exclaimed the man, "I arrest you. You, Horace, witness the arrest." Horace consented; both parties shouted, a crowd collected, and Horace was saved.

It is just possible that Fuscus, who enjoyed Horace's discomfiture, is represented to have made that offensive remark about the Jews so as to give a hit to that bore who belonged to that abject class of Jew that gulps down any insults to his race, as long as he can be seen in the company of men of society. On the other hand, the remark about the Jews may have no particular meaning at all. I was pondering whether some Jews of quite a different stamp, men of noble aspirations, who are constantly at pains to show others that we are not so black as we are painted, were not sometimes too prone to urge their endeavours upon others—I was wondering whether they were wise in doing so. My thoughts took a more serious turn; my semi-somnolence changed into complete somnolence, and I fell fast asleep. This was the ultimate effect of these mutoscopical vagaries of my mind; they sent me to sleep. I shall not be surprised in the least if their description will have the same effect upon you.

S. A. HIRSCH.